

Tale Feathers

Dec 2002

Volume 69
Number 10



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Holiday Open House

Bring your book gift list to the Holiday Open House and Book Fair, a combined Webster Groves Nature Study Society and St. Louis Audubon Society gathering at Tyson Research Center on Dec. 8, 2002, 1-4 pm.

This year WGNSS is offering a book sale from the collections of Jack Van Benthuyssen and Viola Bucholz, both experienced birders. Some interesting titles that may be perfect for the birders on your list or as additions to your own library include *Shorebirds, An Identification Guide*; *Birding Around the Year*; *Extinct Birds*; *Audubon's Wildlife*; *Missouri Ozark Waterways*; and *The Birdwatchers Handbook*. Jack's collection includes many bird guides to regions of the USA such as the Texas Coast, Yellowstone National Park, the Rio Grande Valley, New York City and the San Juan Islands. He was a saver of important birding magazines. WGNSS has received his four boxes of *American Birds*, the birding journal of the National Audubon Society and *Birder's World*. All are available.

Come to enjoy friends, browse among the books, hike Tyson's beautiful trails and indulge in holiday treats from the buffet. Beverages will be provided. Don't forget your gift list and dessert or appetizer to share.

When: Dec. 8, 2002 1-4 pm

Where: Tyson Research Center (Follow I-44 west to the Antire Road exit. Turn right at the top of the exit ramp. Enter the gate and follow the main road about a mile to the headquarter's parking area on your right.)



St. Louis Audubon Society

Volunteers

HELP WANTED: The education committee meets every month with a great core group of people. We are always looking for fresh faces and ideas. If you are interested in joining our group, as we are getting very busy and need some help, please call to join us. If you are interested in giving school programs on birds, butterflies or bats we have a great on-the-job training program available. We have a lot of fun and learn a lot in the process. If you have any spare time to donate to environmental education here is your opportunity. Call **Dale Ponce at 696-394-6011** or **Vicki Flier at 314-968-9166** for more information.

DONATION

The Education Committee is hoping for the donation of a working carousel slide projector to support its programs with children. Also, in March, we will be working with 4th, 5th, and 6th grade Girl Scouts on the Wildlife merit badge and need the donation/loan of 1 or 2 spotting scopes, preferably small and inexpensive. If you can help out with either of these items, please contact Dale Ponce, 636-394-6011 or Dency Kahn, dency@swbell.net. Thank you.

PARTY!!!

The next newsletter mailing party is Dec. 22 at 7:30 pm. Call Anne Bolte (314)832-0938 or Bill Salsgiver (636)225-1490 for information on where and to get directions.

Member Profiles

This month we begin again our series of profiles of St Louis Audubon members.

Bill Salsgiver was first elected to the board in 1980. He has previously served as VP for Conservation and as President. After an absence of a few years, he was again elected as President in April 2002.

Describe your educational background.

A.B. in Biology from Lehigh University and an M.S. in Microbiology from the University of Missouri

Describe your current occupation.

Biochemist at Pharmacia conducting medical research.

What is your current function/role with SLAS?

President.

What is your #1 conservation concern at any level, from local to global?

Over-population is the greatest issue, but I do not think SLAS can have much of a direct impact. We could educate voters who, in turn, can influence legislators. But locally we have decided not to address this issue. It is too political. On the other hand, the chapter has been very successful with habitat preservation/restoration and land management issues. Education and community outreach have also been strengths in recent years.

In what ways can NAS or SLAS address this concern?

For decades, perhaps Audubon's best quality has been as a moderate voice of reason. We have been practical and willing to compromise. Other environmental organizations are not willing to give an inch, and I think that hurts them in the eyes of the general public, and certainly in the eyes of decision makers. Again, I think over-population is too political an issue to address locally, but much else can be accomplished in conservation and education by being out there and visible as a respected, intelligent voice of reason.

What is your long-term vision/goals for SLAS?

I hope to expand our cooperation with other conservation, environmental, and education organizations and thereby be more effective in meeting our common goals. We should stand alone when we need to, but cooperate everywhere we can.

Two Rivers Workday Successful

Mitch Leachman

It was a small but hardy group that showed up for only our second workday at the Two Rivers National Wildlife Refuge on October 19th. Many thanks to Dan Curran, Mitch Leachman, Sherry McCowan, and Mary Smidt for spending a beautiful fall day helping to make the refuge a better place. Thanks also to Russ Engelke, Assistant Refuge Manager, for his expert assistance.

Although we did manage to fill the refuge pick-up with trash, much more refuse went unnoticed beneath the still green leaves. Also, we managed to remove some willows from the main levee road at the east end of Gilbert Lake. This dramatically improved visibility for watchers of wildlife on the Lake, and assisted the refuge staff in a vital, but time-consuming, maintenance task. However, with limited volunteers, there is much more work to be done. Please watch the newsletter for a yet-to-be-scheduled workday in late winter.



Cerulean Warbler: Species Status Review Needs YOUR Input

Sue Gustafson

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced on October 23, 2002 that it will expand its review of the status of the Cerulean Warbler, after reviewing a petition to list the warbler as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Service found the petition contained information indicating there may be a need to list the species. In October 2000, 28 groups including the National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and 26 regional and local groups petitioned the FWS to have the warbler listed as a threatened species.

The Service's finding initiates a further evaluation of the status of the Cerulean Warbler, a species which inhabits woodlands from the East Coast to the Mississippi River. During the evaluation, the Service will open a **90-day public comment period** to allow the agency to receive information about the Cerulean Warbler from state, tribal, and other federal agencies, universities, scientists, and the general public. After reviewing available information, the Service will make a decision whether to propose the Cerulean Warbler as a threatened species.

The Service is seeking additional information from the public on the Cerulean Warbler and threats to its habitat. It is important that birders, and especially long-time birders, comment on their observations of where Ceruleans are no longer seen in historically-seen habitats, or where Ceruleans are still seen in specific habitats but in declining numbers. Information and comments may be submitted to:

Field Supervisor
Ecological Services Field Office
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
608 East Cherry Street, Room 200
Columbia, Missouri 65201.

They may also be faxed to that office at 314-876-1914. To ensure their consideration, all comments and other information must be received by the close of the comment period on January 21, 2003. Information on the petition to list the Cerulean Warbler and the Service's 2000 status assessment is available on the Service's website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/endangered>

Join Us on Local Christmas Bird Counts and Have Fun!

Jim Malone

At the end of the 1800s, in a popular holiday tradition known as a "Side Hunt", teams were chosen, then they went into the fields to see who could kill the largest pile of birds on that day. On Christmas day, 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman (an early officer in the Audubon Society) suggested that the practice be changed from a slaughter to a count of the birds in the area, and so was born the annual Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs) which are practiced all across the Western Hemisphere. Each year between December 14th and January 5th, more than 50,000 birders join together to tally numbers and species of birds present in pre-determined 17-mile circles. Numbers from these counts are compiled into the longest running database in ornithology, serving as an invaluable source of information about the distribution and numbers of birds in our hemisphere. In the St. Louis area there are 6 public Christmas Counts that need your help. Please contact the organizers of these events, and participate in one or more of them if you can. They are great fun, a wonderful place to meet other birders, and a good way to find out about new birding areas in the St. Louis area.

Pere Marquette CBC, Dec. 15

Organizer: Robert Thomas
Meet at 8AM at Pere
Marquette Lodge
(636) 397-0123

Orchard Farm, MO CBC, Jan. 1

Organizer: Randy Korotev
Meet at 8AM at junction of Hwy 94
And Hwy B outside of St. Charles, MO
(314) 993-0055

Weldon Springs, MO CBC, Jan. 4

Organizer: Tom Parmeter
Meet at 8:00 AM at the Busch C.A
Headquarters Parking lot
(314) 921-6017

Collinsville, IL CBC, Dec. 21

Organizer: Joni Hendrickson
(618) 632-6871

Carlyle Lake, IL CBC, Dec. 17

Organizer: Dan Kassebaum
Meet at Carlyle McDonalds at
6:00AM (618) 233-5451

Baldwin Lake, IL CBC, Dec. 14

Organizer: Tim Dever
(618) 443-6732

Participants will be asked to pay \$5.00 for each CBC, and they will be mailed compiled results directly from National Audubon Society.

What Makes the National Audubon Society Different

Jim Holsen

The National Audubon Society is different from every other nationally-based environmental organization -- it has a network of over 500 local chapters across the country. And each of these chapters is an independently incorporated not-for-profit society that works enthusiastically to promote conservation and conservation education in its own community. Subject only to their own boards of directors, these Audubon societies show a zeal in their efforts that is the envy of every other environmental group.

The story of how the National Audubon Society came to acquire a network of independent chapters involves the St. Louis Audubon Society and is part of our own history.

Association of National Audubon Societies Formed in 1905 -- In the final decades of the 1890's, our nation awoke to the unimaginable loss of wildlife that was occurring. Buffalo had disappeared from the Great Plains. Passenger pigeons were in a precipitous decline, and the last of the Indian Wars were being fought in the Dakotas.

In response, the Massachusetts Audubon Society was organized in 1896 by women determined to put a stop to the use of egret feathers to adorn women's hats. Soon other state Audubon societies followed. In 1905, many, but not all, of these societies incorporated as the Associated Audubon Societies for the Protection of Wild Birds and Animals. Later the name was changed to National Audubon Society.

St. Louis Bird Club Formed in 1916 -- Responding to the national interest in birds and other wildlife, in 1916, Dr. Robert Terry, a professor of anatomy and head of the department at Washington University, established the St. Louis Bird Club. Within a year, the Club was conducting birding walks in Shaw's Garden and was also engaged in effective programs in conservation and education.

Wayne Short Initiates Screen Tour Programs -- In the late 1930's, Wayne Short, a local birder, accepted the presidency of the Bird Club. At the same time, Wayne accepted a job as newscaster for Radio Station KSD, then owned by the St. Louis Post Dispatch. Colored film was just then coming into wide use and a number of naturalists were touring the country, illustrating their lectures with films of nature and wildlife. Wayne invited several of these lecturers to come to St. Louis to address the Bird Club. The reaction was spectacular. In 1940, Dr. A. A. Allen drew an audience of 800 for his "intimate glimpses of bird life." Wayne used his connections with KSD and the Post Dispatch to promote the programs. Membership in the Bird Club soared.

In early 1943, Wayne was asked to organize a similar program of Audubon Screen Tours for the National Audubon Society -- he could keep his home in St. Louis and retain the presidency of the Bird Club. His job was to persuade nature societies and bird clubs around the country to participate in the screen tours. The first program, in Detroit, was a great success, drawing over 1000 persons. Many bird clubs around the country joined the program.

St. Louis Bird Club Becomes First "Branch" or Chapter of the National Audubon Society -- Wayne suggested that if the many nature societies and bird clubs participating in the Audubon Screen Tours could be persuaded to become affiliates of National Audubon, they could induce their own members to become members of National Audubon, greatly expanding its membership. Wayne was persuaded to ask his St. Louis Bird Club to take the lead. Consequently, at a meeting in the Jefferson Memorial on a hot summer night in July, the board of directors of the St. Louis Bird Club, acting on a motion by Marshall Magner, voted to become the first "Branch," later called Chapter, of the National Audubon Society.

St. Louis Audubon continued its Screen Tour program until the mid-1980's, when audiences dwindled as nature shows proliferated on home TV screens.

The Role of Chapters in the National Audubon Society -- Wayne Short's story of how the St. Louis Bird Club came to be the first chapter of the National Audubon Society explains why all chapters of National Audubon are independently incorporated -- the bird clubs and nature societies that formed the first chapters of National Audubon were already independently incorporated societies when they voted to join Audubon, and that policy has continued to this day. This is in sharp contrast to other environmental organizations like The Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club. In those organizations, the local or state chapters are created and controlled by the boards of directors of the parent organizations. Not so in Audubon; chapters can and occasionally do differ with National on matters of environmental policy.

Audubon's vitality derives from the enthusiasm of its many chapter members who subscribe to National Audubon's goals, but who work out their own approaches to the achievement of those goals. At times, conflicts and tensions arise between chapters and National Audubon, but, on the whole, both chapters and National are healthier and more effective as a result.

Late Fall/Early Winter Birding is Pretty Darn Good!

Jim Malone

This fall we have seen some great birds on bird walks around the St. Louis area. On October 12th, we spent a productive day at 2 Rivers National Wildlife Refuge. Starting our trip at Gilbert Lake, birders were treated to late Yellow-Billed Cuckoos and Little Blue Heron. From there we continued on to Pulman Slough, and the area around the 2 Rivers headquarters. Finally, we finished the day at Bim's place, and found a huge group of ducks and geese there. In all, we had 10 species of waterfowl, and 5 raptors, 6 species of woodpeckers and 4 of Sparrows. On the 27th, we visited Horseshoe Lake and had another good collection of birds including 20 Horned Grebes, 2 Black-Crowned Night Herons, Franklin's and Bonaparte's Gulls and another good selection of sparrows. Our early November visit to Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area was a very special day. Nearly 40 birders joined us as we watched Common Loons, a Western Grebe, 9 Surf Scotors, a White-Winged Scotor, and 2 adult Tundra Swans as trip highlights. If these trips sound like something you might enjoy, come and join us on one of these upcoming trips.

December 7 (Saturday) Riverlands EDA, 1:00 PM Our November trip to Riverlands is a valid demonstration of the great birding we can expect to see at this location in the winter. This walk is planned for the afternoon instead of our usual morning starting time to give us views of a slightly different population of birds that moves into the area near dusk. We will bird the afternoon, looking at waterfowl, gulls, and hopefully, Short-Eared Owls near dusk. Wear warm clothes and protect yourselves from the strong winds usually present at this site. To get there, follow Highway 367 North from I-270 past highway 94. At the base of the Clark Bridge (over the Mississippi River), turn right at the gas station and right again at the first road. We meet in the Teal pond parking lot.

January 4 (Saturday) Riverlands EDA, 9:00 AM Since this is the single best location to visit at this time of year, we will be visiting Riverlands again in early January. By this time, the gulls should be here in full force and who knows, the Smew we saw a couple of years ago may decide to come back this January. Come and help us look for something really great. If you need further information about these walks or any of the upcoming trips we will be offering, contact Jim Malone at stlaud@surfbest.net or (636) 737-7190.

U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service Urban Bird Conservation Treaty Program

Sue Gustafson

Over the past nine months, I have had the privilege of working under two U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) grants awarded through St. Louis Audubon and the Webster Groves Nature Study Society (WGNSS). My work entailed serving as the St. Louis coordinator for a potential FWS program recently begun in urban areas entitled the Urban Bird Conservation Treaty Program. The program is currently underway in Chicago, New Orleans, and Philadelphia. Other cities coming on board in the pilot phase are Houston, Anchorage, and Portland, OR. The program entails FWS partnering with the "treaty city" to provide federal funding for bird conservation projects in the areas of education/outreach, habitat restoration, and hazard reduction. The Columbia, MO FWS office is interested in establishing this program in St. Louis, therefore, it was my assignment to prepare a formal document which was submitted to the FWS Division of Migratory Bird Management in Washington, DC that nominates St. Louis to become a future treaty city. My work involved meeting with various government agencies and non-government organizations in St. Louis City and County to document the bird conservation-related projects proposed over the next several years and the non-federal funding committed to such projects.

The proposal includes such educational activities as bird classroom presentations, bird walks, and International Migratory Bird Week festivities. Habitat restoration projects include those in Forest Park, The Green Center, North Riverfront Trail, Tower Grove Park, and four St. Louis County parks. Hazard reduction projects include decreasing avian fatalities caused by lighted buildings and pesticide use. In addition to WGNSS and St. Louis Audubon, treaty partners will include St. Louis City Parks, St. Louis County Parks, Tower Grove Park, Confluence Greenway, Metropolitan Park and Recreation District, Grace Hill Settlement House, Open Space Council, East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, The Green Center, Earth Angels, and the Missouri Department of Conservation. Included in my proposal document were letters of endorsement signed by Mayor Francis Slay, County Executive Buzz Westfall, MDC Director John Hoskins, and U. S. Representative Dick Gephardt. We hope to hear the outcome of the St. Louis proposal by the first quarter of 2003. The FWS Treaty program will be a wonderful opportunity to increase public awareness of the tremendous need for bird conservation, especially in urban areas.

Enjoy Life! Go Birding !!

Did You Kill All Those Birds?

Dale Ponce

Two volunteer teachers from the Audubon Education Committee enter an elementary school room carrying a plastic storage box. The classroom teacher introduces them and one of the volunteers begins to speak, explaining that they are here to learn something about birds.

At might be expected, some of the children are talking, some are moving things around on their desks; others are just fidgety and some are looking out the window.

At this point, the second volunteer places the plastic box on the table, removes the lid and begins to carefully lay about the twenty freeze-dried birds on the table. There is an immediate hush in the room. Some mouths are agape, necks are straining to get a better view and all eyes are wide open - riveted on the birds. Every good fisherman knows he cannot catch fish without bait on his hook. Well, these kids are hooked.

Usually, in less than a minute, several hands will go up and two predictable questions will be asked. "Are those real birds?" "Did you kill all those birds?" The teachers explain that yes, they are real and they explain a little about freeze-drying and no, we did not kill all the birds adding that most of them died as a result of flying into windows. The point is always made that these birds were collected and preserved to provide children with the opportunity to see them up close so that they could appreciate and learn about them.

The presentation of the bird program begins with briefly touching upon basic bird anatomy and then concentrating upon adaptations. To talk about the various kinds of beaks, feet, wing shapes, etc. is one thing, but to show them these differences, while explaining them, is paramount to understanding and retention. The program closes with a discussion of the environmental importance of birds and what the children can do to help. It is also significant to note the knowledge these children already have as well as the quality of the questions they ask.

In addition to the bird program, the Education Committee volunteers also present programs on butterflies, bats, owls, and flowering plants. This program was started a few short years ago by Vicki Flier, Past Vice-president of Education along with two other volunteers. Initially, the bird program was presented to only a few elementary classes in St. Charles County.

Since that humble beginning, our programs have grown to include school districts in St. Louis County, St. Louis City, Hillsboro, private and parochial schools, garden clubs, Girl Scout merit badge camps, St. Louis County Parks Department, Chesterfield City Parks Department and a 4-H club in St. Genevieve. This tremendous growth is in and of itself a testament to the quality of these programs. However, there is a downside.

Since the beginning, the original three volunteers have grown to nine. However, most of them have jobs and although they have made a supreme effort to participate in presenting numerous programs, we are reaching the saturation point of our ability to grow.

Therefore, I am making a plea to any member who feels like they would like to join in our effort. Please call and let me know. My number is (636)394-6011. It is not necessary that you be an experienced teacher because we will provide the training necessary to present these programs. All you need is the desire to help. The pay is nonexistent but the rewards are priceless.

Litzsinger Road Ecology Center Seeks Volunteers

Master Ecologists are docents who work with children, ages 5-18 from the St. Louis metro area by engaging the students in ecology studies at the Litzsinger Road Ecology Center (LREC). This 34-acre field station is operated by the Missouri Botanical Garden exclusively for education and research activities and is not open to the public. Field exploration sites at the LREC include a restored prairie, a bottomland or floodplain forest, and a section of Deer Creek. Our educational programs improve students' understanding of the natural world and the processes of science by providing hands-on learning in ecology. For example, a Master Ecologist may teach upper elementary students how to measure and compare biotic and abiotic factors in our three natural areas or guide lower elementary students through lesson activities to experience and observe the natural world. No prior science or teaching experience is required but an enthusiasm for sharing your sense of wonder with children is essential.

The Master Ecologist Training includes presentations on basic ecological concepts, outdoor teaching methods, and specific on-site lessons. Trainees must complete the training session plus 50 hours of volunteer service at the LREC in order to qualify for certification. School groups schedule partial-day visits M-F 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. only. Benefits include training and materials, educational enrichment opportunities throughout the year, and the satisfaction of helping children learn about the natural world. Observation of classes at the LREC before beginning training is recommended.

The Spring 2003 training operates every other Monday starting January 13th through April 7th from 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Trainees will monitor at least one school group visit between training days.

For application form and further information, please contact:

Celeste Prussia, LREC Director

314-577-5117; celeste.prussia@mobot.org

Holiday Gift Ideas for the Birder Who Has Everything (Almost!)

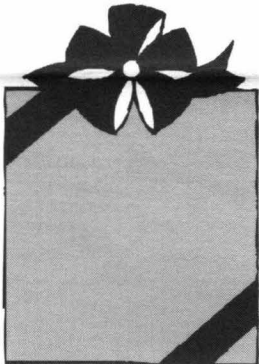
A Guide to Birding in Missouri -- Gift Giving Idea

The Audubon Society of Missouri's A Guide to Birding in Missouri will be available for purchase at all upcoming St. Louis Audubon Society events for \$17.00 per book. A portion of the proceeds from the book sales will remain with our chapter.

Compiled and edited by Kay and Bill Palmer, this spiral bound guide includes contributions from 62 of Missouri's most experienced birders, with information on 143 locations. The state is divided into Central, Northeast, Northwest, Southwest and Southeast sections, with a separate chapter for 12 of the major birding areas in the St. Louis area. Maps are provided for each section to easily locate the birding sites. Bar graphs for each species indicate when the birds are likely to occur throughout the year.

The book will be available at St. Louis Audubon Society field trips and monthly general meetings. The next event that the book will be available at will be our holiday open house on Sunday, December 8 at Tyson Research Center. Just in time for the holidays -- get one for yourself and one for a friend!

Book Signing at Powder Valley Nature Center



Jim D. Wilson, recently retired MDC ornithologist, is going to be at Powder Valley Dec. 7th (Sat.) in the morning (10-12) to sign copies of his recently-published field guide. The nature center will have copies of the field guide on sale.

Tale Feathers

Tale Feathers is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 2,500 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Anne Bolte edits the newsletter.

St. Louis Audubon Society 2002 - 2003

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Get Published!

The deadline for the Jan. issue is Dec 10. Please send articles, events and letters to Anne.

E-mail ambolte@swbell.net

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post 6939 Sharp

St. Louis, MO 63116

SLAS GIFT MEMBERSHIP

Give a gift membership to the St. Louis Audubon Society to your favorite birder for the holidays. Membership is just fifteen dollars and includes ten issues of *Tale Feathers*. Join us for an exciting year of bird walks, speaker series and exciting opportunities to make a difference. Fill out the coupon below and send it to:

St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, MO 63122

Name _____

Address _____

Please indicate on the envelope that this a gift membership

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This form makes you a member of **both** the National and St. Louis Audubon.

Audubon is a membership organization dedicated to protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Our members are the source of our volunteer strength and the foundation of our financial support. By becoming a member, you will receive National Audubon Society's magazine as well as the St. Louis Audubon Society newsletter, *Tale Feathers*.

St. Louis Audubon Society Membership Form

Membership category desired:

- ☐ Introductory / \$20
☐ Special two-year Introductory / \$30
☐ Sr. Citizen / Student / \$15
☐ Local Chapter / \$15 Make checks payable
to SLAS and send to above address

Send a check made out to:
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P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, Mo. 63122

Name _____

Address _____

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Please support your local chapter. Use this form to join or renew.